

# The Christian News-Letter

Edited by  
J. H. OLDHAM

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DEAR MEMBER,

I have just returned from a month's visit to Sweden, and Dr. Oldham has asked me to give you some of my impressions.

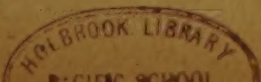
## A VISIT TO SWEDEN

I held confirmations in Stockholm and Gothenberg, and met the members of the British colonies. I owe much gratitude to the British Minister, Mr. Victor Mallet, who has won a high place in the esteem of Swedish people for the admirable manner in which he represents Great Britain; and to Mrs. Mallet, together with the Legation staff and the Chaplain, the Rev. C. H. Jones. But my particular purpose was to be a messenger of Christian fellowship and to see old friends, especially in the Church of Sweden. And as I brought personal messages not only from the Church of England, but from the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Scotland, the Free Churches and the Greek Orthodox Church, I was able to make contacts with the different Churches in Sweden in a remarkable way.

I was also very glad to give personal information to the Archbishop of Upsala and other Bishops of the Church of Sweden, to Bishop Muller for the Roman Catholics, and to Dr. Nordström and his Free Church colleagues, of the new movement for Christian co-operation which has been launched in this country; and to explain something of the purpose of the statement issued a short while ago by the Joint Committee of which the Bishop of London is chairman, including the passage about religious freedom.

They were all deeply interested. The Church of Sweden and the Free Churches co-operate regularly. But when the Roman Catholic Bishop Muller, on the Archbishop of Upsala's invitation, attended the official Swedish Church meeting last year, it was much commented on as the first occasion on which there had been such a move in Sweden since the Reformation. The Archbishop was criticized in some quarters for his initiative. But he took the step deliberately and repeated it this year. And as Bishop Muller said to me, co-operation in the practical field is "a necessity" in times like these.

I found it extraordinarily instructive to be in Sweden in war-time, after my three previous visits before the war. I travelled to many places, spoke and was questioned at many meetings, and had a large number of conversations with men and women in various walks of life. Everywhere there was the deepest interest in Great Britain, and I found the great majority of Swedes very much on the side of the Allies. They are eager to hear what is going on in England generally. They appreciate news of British courage and confidence in war-time conditions. They have an appetite for facts. They welcome descriptions of how London looks, the amount of damage from air raids in different parts of the country, and such matters as how we manage with our food. But still more badly they want to know about our plans for social reconstruction, educational reform and similar matters. I felt more than ever, as I studied their institutions, how essential it is that we should make great changes in our own social and educational systems. Incidentally, I was particularly interested to see that the Archbishop of Canterbury's new





Penguin *Christianity and Social Order* had a three-and-a-half column review in a leading Stockholm daily paper, *Dagens Nyheter* on June 5th, under the heading *Message from Canterbury*.

## THE PROBLEM OF EUROPE

The Swedes are also very keen to know what we are thinking about the situation in Europe after the war. Indeed, it was especially with regard to the problem of Europe that I found my visit so illuminating. Owing to the war, England is strangely isolated from most of the countries of Europe—more isolated than it was in 1914–1918, when we were in close contact with France, Italy, Holland and all the Scandinavian nations. Sweden is in constant touch with all the theatres of war. You can read papers and meet people from practically all the European countries. More than that, in Sweden you are really in one of the key places of Europe, and can learn not simply the British, or American, or Russian, or German, but the European point of view. Sweden sees the war from different angles on its own borders. Norway, its neighbour on the west, is occupied by the Nazis. Finland, its neighbour on the east, is allied to Germany, and is engaged in a life and death struggle with Russia. With both Finland and Norway the Swedes have the closest associations. They feel deeply for Finland, and some 2,000 Finnish children are now receiving the hospitality of Swedish homes. The courage of the Finns, their losses, their sufferings, and their famine, and the dread of Russia, combine to make a profound impression. The Swedes were moved by the invasion of Norway in 1940; but they have been stirred to the depths by the Nazi occupation. Nothing has done more to arouse an anti-Nazi spirit in Sweden than the execution of Norwegian Trade Unionists last autumn, the deportation of some 500 teachers to a labour camp in the north, and the conflict with the Church. The name of Bishop Berggrav is held in high honour throughout Sweden, while he is closely guarded by eleven armed soldiers in his own small house outside Oslo surrounded by barbed wire, in company with his son, and not allowed to communicate with the outside world. Thousands wear pins on their coats or dresses, showing the Kings of Norway and Sweden standing side by side.

But there is also the general political and economic situation. Sweden, while a northern country, and having ties with Britain and the west, is intimately bound up with Central Europe. No just account of Swedish opinion can fail to emphasize Sweden's distrust of Soviet Russia, or note the added grounds which it believes it has for that distrust in recent events in Finland under Soviet pressure, especially between the two Finnish wars, and in Esthonia, Latvia and Lithuania immediately after the annexation of those States by Soviet Russia in 1941. From every point of view the duty of thinking in European terms is forced upon it. Certainly the fact that Sweden is not at war may induce a kind of selfishness. But it is also true that, being out of the war, it is less liable to have its judgement affected by passion. It knows it has its own part to play—military as well as economic—in a stable European structure. And its own past history, its awareness of the growing disintegration of Europe from 1919 to 1939, and the circumstances of the war, compel it to think of the future of Europe as a whole.

Hitler has attempted the unification of Europe by brute force. His attempt has failed in a disastrous way, because of the brutal methods employed, and because of his objective—the enslavement of all other nations by Germany. The sufferings inflicted by Hitler and Himmler and their agents are unspeakable. The terror which they bring, their ruthlessness and savagery are such that there is no hope for the future of Europe so long as the Nazi regime survives. The whole regime from top to bottom must go. But as I talked to men of many different nations in Sweden about the sequel, after the overthrow of the regime, it became clearer and clearer that the problem of Europe has still to be solved. The collapse of Hitler will leave a vacuum in Europe. Unless the problem of how that vacuum can be rightly filled is squarely and immediately faced, the last state of Europe may be worse than the first.



## ORDER IN EUROPE OR CIVIL WAR

The question of European order is intimately bound up with that of world order. We are all bound to face this issue. We must look at it from the point of view of the duty of the State. We must also look at it as it bears on the task of the Church. Hitler's system is doomed, and the crash may come more suddenly and sooner than some expect. When the crash comes—*What next?* There is famine already in some of the Occupied Countries—and it will spread like the plague. There is famine in Finland. There is food shortage even now in Northern Russia. Everybody agrees that food on a large scale will be required. The rushing of food from the reserve stores to countries which need it will be an urgent necessity. But even before food can be distributed, order is indispensable.

The problem of order, both permanent and immediate, is a fundamental problem and will brook no delay. Take Germany first. With the collapse of the Nazi regime there is the immediate danger of civil war all over Germany, in which the two million men and women from the Occupied Countries now doing forced labour as slaves may have something to say. Take the Occupied Countries themselves and consider the hatred felt by their peoples for the Nazis. Once the news reaches Norway, Holland, Belgium, Bohemia, Moravia, Yugo-Slavia, that Hitler and all his men have fallen—*What then?* Just because the provocations have been so great we have to beware of a different kind of bloodshed on a terrible scale. Almost certainly there will be immediate risings against the three grades of enemy—the German army (the grade least hated), the Gestapo and the Quislings, unless the reins of government can be immediately seized by a proper authority with power. There will be danger of similar violence in Poland, and even of the use of Polish soil as a battle ground on which Polish, German and Russian forces are all fighting. And unless the proper steps for order are taken in time, there will be danger of another civil war in France. The whole situation is big with peril.

The problem of how best to secure *permanent* order in Europe has, of course, to be faced. It will require a far longer time, and the co-operation of the wisest and best minds. Permanent order cannot be achieved by returning to the *status quo*. The situation of the twenty years before the war, with its acute political and economic nationalism dividing the nations, its social and political antagonisms and economic rivalries within each nation, was not order. Indeed, unless changed by peaceful means, it was bound in the end to issue in catastrophe. All the nations of Europe must play their part in finding a solution, and a very special responsibility falls on the British Empire, the United States of America and Russia, to work together in the completest possible mutual understanding. And justice must be done to the countries which have been treated with such cruelty by the Nazis. But the problem of securing *immediate* order has to be prepared for and faced now by the Allied Powers. Unless our statesmen tackle it now, the victory of which we are certain will be turned into ashes.

## THE TASK OF THE CHURCH

As we face these facts, we become even more sure that we are also in the midst of a grave spiritual crisis. There is a spiritual vacuum as well as a political to be filled. On my visit to Sweden I saw in a new way how in country after country the Church has proved a great bulwark of resistance to the totalitarian state. The stand of the Church in Norway has made a deep impression on all Scandinavians; the stand of the Church, both Catholic and Protestant, in Holland is not less remarkable. The Church is the focus of national opposition in Denmark. In Belgium also the voice of the Church rings out in opposition to the Nazis. And from time to time the protest of the Church has been heard in Germany, after, as well as before, the outbreak of war. This attitude of the Church is not just a form of patriotic enthusiasm or reaction. It is a new and dynamic fact. The Church sees in the Nazi regime a spiritual foe, which its whole nature compels it to withstand. But it is not enough to withstand the foe. The Church has a great positive and creative mission. Nothing less than a passionate going out into all nations to preach the Gospel of God's



Love, the Cross and the Resurrection, can suffice. Nothing less than a crusade, by all the Churches working together, for the conversion, the re-Christianizing of Europe. Something more profound than a political or economic change is required. What is needed is a spiritual transformation in the very depths of men's hearts, through the working of the Spirit and through prayer. And this spiritual transformation involves a transformed conception of the worth of the individual in the nation, of the value of the family, and of the place of the nation in the community of nations; such a conception as makes it an absolute obligation for the Christian individual, and the Christian-led nation, to seek the economic, social, moral and spiritual good of all. Why should not something new be done in Europe by faith working through love?

But the Church has an immediate task as well. When the Nazis crash, it will be the Church's function in the Occupied Countries to set its face against mob rule and revenge, no less clearly than it did against Nazi tyranny. So with the Church in the British Empire and America and all the Allied countries. The crimes of the Nazi men of terror and their agents are monstrous. Justice requires that the criminals should suffer their full punishment. But the punishment ought to be inflicted in the proper way, and after a proper trial. The Church knows and feels the agony of the victims. The Church, as the upholder of the Law of God, must stand for order. At the same time, as the imperfect witness of the Love of God, the Church must appeal to the nations to refrain from violence and rage. Indeed, more than ever in these dark days, it is the special function of the Church to preach the Gospel of Redemption, and affirm its conviction that it is only through love that the wounds of the nations can be healed. The Church is charged to build a spiritual wall against vengeance and hatred. The charge comes to every Church as a Church, and to all the Churches, in real Christian co-operation with one another, across national as well as denominational frontiers. It is a call to each individual Christian as well. It is a call to believe in the Spirit, to listen to the Spirit, to join one another in surrender to the Spirit, so that, as Spirit-filled men and women, Christians everywhere in every nation, street, occupation and home may be a living spiritual wall of faith and love. It is a direct call, dear Member, to you and to me.

Yours very sincerely,

*George Ciestri:*

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